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CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY 8

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121
APR

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Oh.

Hi.

Ger and I are still trying to get the cover-dates caught up with real time, so instead of a Note from the President, here's my favourite Oscar Wilde story used in Anne Clark Amor's 1983 biography of Constance; *Mrs. Oscar Wilde: a Woman of Some Importance* which she credits to Harford Montgomery White's 1976 *Oscar Wilde: a biography* as recalled by Richard Le Gallienne who wrote a couple of books I haven't gotten to yet;

> *'It is the duty of every father,' he said with great gravity, 'to write fairy-tales for his children. But the mind of a child is a great mystery. It is incalculable, and who shall divine it, or bring to it his own peculiar delights? You humbly spread before it the treasures of your imagination, and they are as dross. For example, a day or two ago, Cyril yonder came to me with the question, "Father, do you ever dream?" "Why of course, my darling. It is the first duty of a gentleman to dream." "And what do you dream of?" asked Cyril, with a child's disgusting appetite for facts. Then I, believing, of course, that something picturesque would be expected of me, spoke of magnificent things: "What do I dream of? Oh, I dream of dragons with gold and silver scales, and scarlet things coming out of their mouths, of eagles with eyes made of diamonds that can see over the whole world at once, of lions with yellow manes, and voices like thunder, of elephants with little houses on their backs, and tigers and zebras with barred and spotted coats . . ." So I laboured on with my fancy, till, observing that Cyril was entirely unimpressed, and indeed quite undisguisedly bored, I came to a humiliating stop, and, turning to my son there, I said: "But tell me, what do you dream of, Cyril?" His answer was like a divine revelation: "I dream of pigs," he said.'*

★★★★★★★★★★

I have to confess I made up a word in issue 119. I hereby promise to each of you that I will never again make up a word unless it's a word that **should** exist; like 'orifi'. As to the punctuation, the writer has no urge to look up all the rules of punctuation he has forgotten or disagreed with, so the artist is in charge of it. He likes the look of a semi-colon. So sue me.

★★★★★★★★★★

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CEREBUS

NO. 121 APRIL 1989

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Circulation
26,500

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

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PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to
Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to
Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY
ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to
Cerebus 136)

•

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OSCAR!
OH, OSCAR!
IMPETUOUS BOY
YOU'RE EARLY. I'VE SCARCELY HAD TIME ENOUGH TO...
JAKA WANTS ME TO CLEAN OUT THE CLOSETS WHILE SHE'S AT WORK
SO... um... I CAN'T COME OVER
SOME OTHER TIME FOR SURE THOUGH ...
OKAY?
BIEN SÛR.
WHAT?
OF COURSE DEAR BOY OF COURSE
OKAY. GREAT.

MRS. NASH...

I UNDERSTAND THAT RICHARD HAS ...CHORES... THIS EVENING
AND SO IS UNABLE TO ACCEPT MY INVITATION
RICK.
YES.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THAT BEING THE CASE I THOUGHT I MIGHT DRINK A PROTIGIOUS AMOUNT OF WITHER'S BAD CHAMPAGNE...
AND HAVE YOU DANCE FOR ME...
JUST TO...
WHILE AWAY
... THE EMPTY HOURS

I DON'T GET IT
FIRST IT'S A BIG DEAL THAT I CLEAN OUT THE CLOSETS
AND THEN IT'S A BIG DEAL THAT I COME OVER HERE
WOMEN DEAR BOY ARE UNFATHOMABLE
IT'S THE REASON THEY'RE SO COMPLETELY SELF-ABSORBED
THEY SPEND ALL OF THEIR LIVES PLUMBING THEIR OWN DEPTHS WITHOUT EVER
SO TO SPEAK
TOUCHING BOTTOM.
DRINK?
NOPE.
THANKS
HAD A DRINK YESTERDAY
A WHOLE ONE?
YUP.
YOU MAD THING, YOU.

IT WAS SOME time before Jaka came to the realization that there was no danger of the Locked Door slamming shut behind her; that, in fact, its weight and balance impelled it to open, not close. Thus reassured, she no longer clung to it with the fierce determination of a frightened infant, but contented herself with holding it gently, almost carelessly, between the fingers and thumb of her out-stretched right hand. In the days that followed, her thumb came to share this ennui and relaxed, leaving the full burden of restraint to its companion fingers, their tips curled lightly across the antiquitous wood-grain so that they (and they alone) held the Locked Door in place. In spite of their increased role (or perhaps because of it) her fingers began, after an interval, to become fidgety; curling back into her palm, flicking the Locked Door at the last instant so that it glided smoothly behind her back, slowing, stopping, then retracing its trajectory, increasing its speed until halted once more by those guardian digits. Flick. Pause. Catch. Flick. Pause. Catch.

The repetition (as is repetition's wont) gave rise to fantasy. Or, rather, to three separate fantasies.

In the first, she turned to her right, easing the Locked Door fully open until it rested lightly against the wall behind her. Jaka envisioned herself removing her hands carefully upon completion of this task, lest gravity (through some caprice) should suddenly reverse itself and the door swing closed. She pictured clearly a moment's pause of reassurance and then watched herself walk forward, pulling open the Hidden Door to reveal the sanctum sanctorum so vivid in her mind's eye.

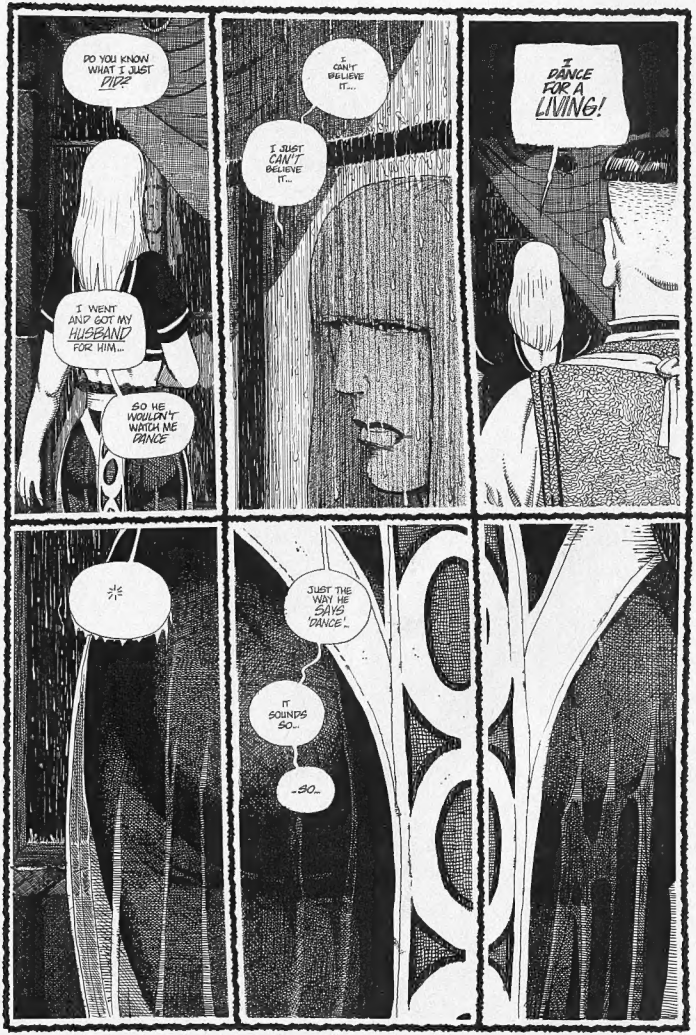
In the second (less a fantasy than a morbid fear), all was as it was in the first, with the exception that upon opening wide the Hidden Door, there was no grimy, dust-covered sanctuary; no womb within a womb; but merely another tastefully-appointed, dimly-lit, scrupulously-maintained corridor vanishing into some distant and dreary point. When she plumbed this fear to its greatest depth, there was even one of the faceless, bureaucratic drones awaiting her there, a few feet away, as she swung wide the tantalizing portal.

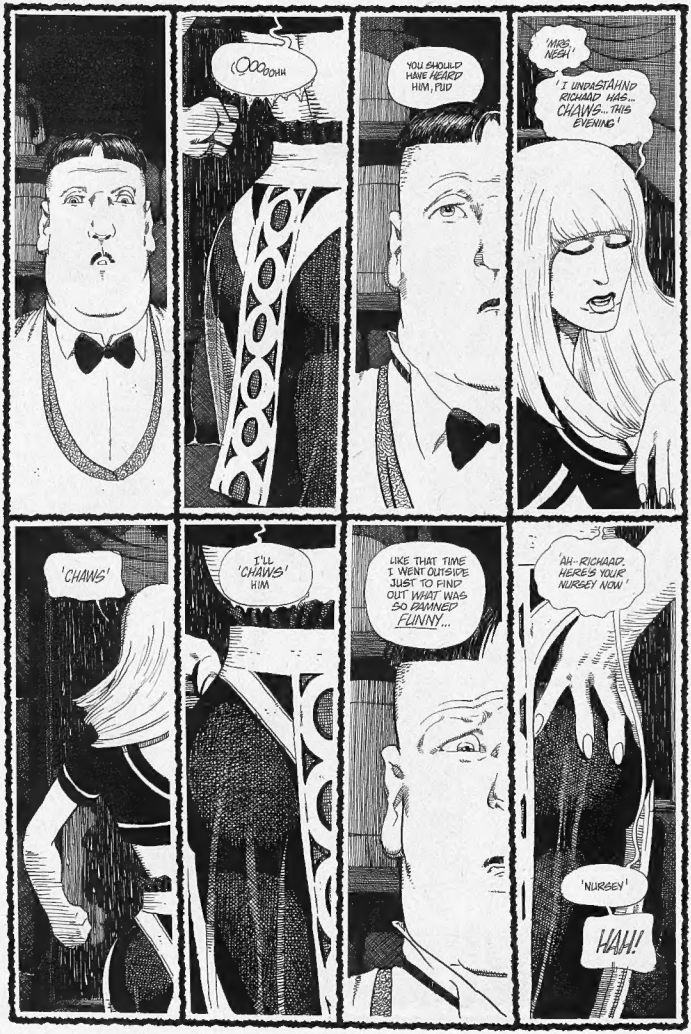
'Can I help you, Miss?'

When she thought of this, her fingers would begin, unconsciously, to accelerate their process, until the flick-pause-catch abbreviated itself to flick-catch-flick and then, further, to flick-flick-flick until her nerves were raw and painful to her.

In her third fantasy (to which she retreated when she could no longer bear the crushing disappointment of her second), she imagined herself straightening her fingers in the middle of their occupation; could almost feel the light rush of air as the Locked Door swung past her fore-arm, wrist, the ball of her thumb, accelerating smoothly as it swept by the first, second and third joints of her fingers, launching itself into empty, foetid space, faster and faster in the next silent instant until, at peak acceleration, it struck hard the wall behind with an explosive 'bang'. This was followed (in her speculations) by the ominous sound of Nurse's footsteps approaching from the direction of her room. 'Jaka?! JAKA!!' Her fantasy always ended in that moment, as if the speculative core of her brain could no more envision the scope of Nurse's wrath than could her conscious mind.

'Let go.'


DO YOU KNOW WHAT I JUST DID?
I WENT AND GOT MY HUSBAND FOR HIM...
SO HE WOULDN'T WATCH ME DANCE
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
I DANCE FOR A LIVING!
JUST THE WAY HE SAYS 'DANCE'...
IT SOUNDS SO...
...SO...


(OOOOHH
YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD HIM, PUD
'MRS. NEGH'
'I UNDASTÄHND RICHAAD HAS... CHAWS... THIS EVENING'
'CHAWS'
I'LL 'CHAWS' HIM
LIKE THAT TIME I WENT OUTSIDE JUST TO FIND OUT WHAT WAS SO BAWNED FUNNY...
'AH- RICHAAD. HERE'S YOUR NURSEY NOW'
'NURSEY'
HAH!

IT WOULD BE inaccurate to say that she heard a voice; for the communication (if such it was) came from somewhere within her unrelated to her auditory sense; it took the form of a kind of profound (profane?) ripple of self-confidence. A concentric sensation rising out of an unknown (and unknowable) source. It was soothing (this voice) bringing with it subtle power and an unaccustomed calm so that even the ever-present moisture on her palms and soles of her feet evaporated in its wake.

Let go.

It would be equally inaccurate to say that she obeyed the 'voice' without hesitation, for hesitation there was; but, it was a hesitation as fleeting as it was free of anxiety. It would be *more* accurate (though by no stretch of the imagination *precise*) to state that the fingers of Jaka's right hand were more fully-attuned and responsive to her new awareness than was her own conscious mind and that they had (in a manner of speaking) lost patience with their Mistress' indecisiveness. Suffice to say (irrespective of cause), the effect remained. Her fingers straightened of a sudden, almost in the manner of a muscle spasm (though too slowly for that to be a fitting explanation). In the moment that followed, the shadow of her hand detached itself, fingertip by fingertip, from her person and in the gesture of someone drowning, slid smoothly, vertically, gently, down the pitted surface of ancient wood. A second later, it paused, a mere foot or so from the filthy checker'd tiles.

Though it seemed to Jaka that each fibre of her being strained to hear that one, awful, final and reverberating note of impact; though a terrible thrill raced through her even as she contemplated (could virtually *hear* in that moment) Nurse's bellow of righteousness wounded, morality betrayed; no sound came to the young woman's ear. Whether attributable to the Locked Door's balance being less precarious that it had seemed; whether some arcane device; some lost miracle of hinge manufacture forgotten through the ages, had arrested the door's momentum; or whether some forgiving, compassionate and potent deity had intervened to spare her Nurse's wrath, Jaka did not know.

She stood in that same attitude, her right arm out-stretched for several seconds, uncertain of her next move; in many ways still anticipating the plaster-cracking concussion that never came.

At last, muscle fatigue in her shoulder decided the issue and she lowered her right hand to her side.

YOU WEREN'T SERIOUS ABOUT HENRY WOTTON PAYING ALL THOSE BOYS TO STAND AROUND IDOLIZING HIM...
WERE YOU?
'TO STAND AROUND' ...?
SORRY
I DON'T FOLLOW YOU, DEAR BOY.
WHEN YOU ASKED IF THEY GAVE HIM A GROUP RATE
NO.. NO
YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT
HE DOESN'T PAY THEM TO DO THAT.
I THOUGHT SO BECAUSE I'LL-TELL-YOU...
HENRY WOTTON WOULDN'T HAVE TO PAY ME TO STAND AROUND AND IDOLIZE HIM...
NO?
HECK NO! I'D DO IT FOR FREE!
WELL
LUCKY LORD HENRY

SO WHO ELSE DID YOU MEET IN THE UPPER CITY?
MMMM. THE AUTHOR OF 'CHURCH AND STATE'
FUNNY LOOKING CHAP...SO I IMAGINE HIS BOOK MUST BE.
FUNNY, I MEAN.
I HEARD SOMEONE SAY THAT THE ENDING WAS LESS OF A GRANDE FINALE...
THAN A GRAND FINALLY...
DID YOU TELL HIM THAT?
NATURALLY NOT.
I'M A GENTLEMAN. ...I DID WHAT ANY GENTLEMAN WOULD DO...
AND THAT IS...?
I TOLD ALL HIS FRIENDS.

HA!
ALL OF THEM?
YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE A DAUNTING TASK...
I DON'T RECALL IT TAKING MORE THAN A HALF HOUR
YOU'RE THE ABSOLUTE LIMIT, OSCAR
ODD YOU SHOULD SAY THAT. MY BELOVED SPHINX, MRS. LEVERSON HAD A HOUSE-GUEST STAYING WITH HER WHO SAID I...
HOUSE GUEST!
THAT REMINDS ME
WE HAVE A HOUSE-GUEST!..

HOW CHARMING. MALE OR FEMALE?
MALE! AND GUESS WHAT? HE'S
HE'S
HE USED TO BE ...
HE WAS THE...
HE USED TO BE THE...
YES?
HIS NAME IS FRED!
NO WONDER YOU SEEM UNABLE TO CONTAIN YOURSELF
FRED? WHAT?
'FRED WHAT?' WHAT?
WHAT IS HIS LAST NAME, DEAR BOY?
LAST NAME?
YES. THE NAME HE LOSES AFTER THE SALUTORY 'MISTER'
OH
UH
NASH.

AH! A RELATIVE.
JAKA'S BROTHER
I HAVE TO GO
JAKA'S BROTHER? THEN WHY DOES HE HAVE YOUR LAST NAME?
GO WHERE?
HOME. TO CLEAN OUT THE CLOSETS
I THOUGHT WIFEY TOLD YOU YOU COULD DO THAT TOMORROW
SHE DID. I ...UM... I WANT TO SURPRISE HER.
SO WHEN DO I GET TO MEET THIS BROTHER-IN-LAW OF YOURS?
NEVER. I MEAN YOU CAN'T.... I MEAN HE'S SICK
HEAVENS! NOTHING SERIOUS I HOPE...
NO... NOT SERIOUS
I HAVE TO GO
I'LL BRING OVER SOME OF MY HERBAL TEA....
IT'S JUST THE THING FOR
NONO THAT'S OKAY. HE'S ALMOST ALL BETTER
I HAVE TO GO...
GALUMPH
GALUMPH
GALUMPH
GALUMPH
SO I'LL MEET HIM SOON, THEN?
NO! UH.. HE ALWAYS GETS SICK AGAIN IT GOES ON FOR YEARS AT A TIME
SICK
ALMOST ALL BETTER
SICK
ALMOST ALL BETTER
I HAVE TO GO.
BYE.
CLIK
CLACK
SLAM
A BIENTÔT DEAR BOY

HER NEXT AWARENESS was of walking. Not the sure confident strides her sudden wave of confidence might have implied, but rather, the smallest most tentative of steps; as if incremental progress were a kind of non-progress; as if by moving oh-so-slightly in the direction of the Hidden Door, she was actually bringing the door to *her*; or approaching it without need of deserting the safety and security of the Locked Door. Even as she passed over a black tile (which was actually a mottled gray) and a white tile (actually a stained and brownish yellow), her conscious mind clung to the notion that she could yet reach back without looking and there the Locked Door would be: secure, immobile and reassuring at her finger-tips. As details of the Hidden Door resolved and clarified before her (the three babies' heads in the upper corner proved on closer examination, to be large, ornate and quite ugly flowers; the gargoyle figure naught but a carelessly-wrought bower hung with bunches of grapes) she realized that even incremental progress is accumulative and that the Locked Door was now several (normal) steps behind her. At the halfway point a giddiness welled up within her and then was gone as quickly as it had come; a vestigial trace of her many fears. Her stride lengthened, quickened.

In a moment she was there.

THEY TALK ABOUT ME...THAT'S WHAT THEY DO...
I KNOW IT
WHAT A NAG I AM.
WHAT A BAD WIFE I AM.
I'M GOOD ENOUGH TO PAY FOR HIS FOOD, AREN'T I? I'M GOOD ENOUGH TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING HE OWNS AREN'T I?
IT MAKES ME SO MAD
ALL THE TIME!

MMM?
LOSE SOMETHING?
OH, NO, MISS JAKA. I WAS
ehm!s
LOOKING AT A CRACK BETWEEN THE CEILING
OH!!
OH
THE CEILING.
HE'S POISONING RICK.
POISONING HIS MIND. MAKING HIM THINK THE WORLD IS SOME KIND OF... OF.... I DON'T KNOW WHAT
THEY TALK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO DIED A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AS IF THEY KNOW THEM. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ANYTHING SO ...SO... RIDICULOUS?
'SO-AND-SO SAID SUCH-AND-SUCH'... 'ACTUALLY SO-AND-SO DIDN'T SAY IT FIRST; WHATSISNAME SAID IT FIRST'
I MEAN WHO BLOODY CARES?

WITH ONLY THE slightest pause and no ceremony whatever, she pulled open the Hidden Door, the unexpected light blinding her as the shadow of the Hidden Door swept the surface of her face.

TA BUMP
BUMP
TA
BUMP
BUMP

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Folks,

"Pud Withers"?! You're shameless, Dave! Gotta admit, though, it's a great indication of the quality of life for men under Cirinist rule. "Three copper bits" – nice closed economy they've got on the hillside there. Very surreal atmosphere, too. Tense stagnation. Or stagnant tension? So when's all hell gonna break loose? That bit about young Jaka spinning is a *nice* parallel of/with the tower in CHURCH & STATE! Same result too: faw down go boom. No doubt the story of Jaka's recovery will contain clues about life in post-ascension Test. Interesting irony with Jaka, she loves to dance but now earns her keep by not dancing. What an incredibly moody bunch of covers on this book lately. Nice colors Ger! Well, that's all for now. Take care & keep up the great work!

Sincerely,

Eric Hess
211 Pauline Drive
Saltsburg, PA.,
15681

Thank you. I apologize for the excessive flattery in this issue's letter column. I'm basically printing every letter that came in between the time I finished the last letter column (two weeks ago) and now (today). Just happened to be a flattering batch.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave;

OK, I've had about enough of this! Mike Bannon's REAL name is not Mike Bannon, Mike Denn or Mike anything. His name is Beauregard Leialoha. He is also your twin brother. You were born into our family but we were too poor to support you two, so we put you up for adoption. HE went to the Denn family, while you were raised by wolves. I hope this puts an end to this nonsense once and for all.

Yours Whoopily,

Steve Leialoha
68776 Notmyrealnamedave St.
Isreallyleeshedden, BC
Canada, of course

Well, they weren't *all* flattering.

To whom it may concern,

I'm just writing in to tell you guys that I think your book is pretty fucking cool. I get the impression you appreciate audience response so I thought I'd give it a try (knowing full well you may never see this letter). The way I figure it you've left the field open, so to speak, as far as what you want to hear from your viewers, so I can tell you anything I want about it and never really know if you do or don't appreciate the effort. So if I tell you something you find offensive, just remember that I thought it would be alright.

It's a very neat thing you're doing with this Jaka story thing. You create this very familiar little environment. It seems no matter where I'm standing, I have a very clear Idea of the immediate surroundings and their relationship to the general area. In other comic books there is no sense of the space you're in, where the walls are, what's outside, who's outside. One of the greatest strengths of the Cerebus series ever since the introduction of Lord Julius, has been how carefully the situation is set up so that what by other comic standards might be considered a minor activity, takes on far greater significance. In another comic there has to be death, or explosions, or the earth has to be saved for it to be a climatic moment. Now don't get me wrong, I like explosions and atomic punches, it's just nice to see someone take their time and do it in a way that's not so obvious. At the conclusion of Church and State, I was pretty disappointed. A situation is on the verge of complete collapse and insuing may lay to cap off an ascension to power that was simply incredible. We are faced with two paths. One is seeing Cerebus in battle action as supreme political ruler, the other is taking your chances behind door number 2 and see what happens when you meet Tarim and become a god. I was expecting major climatic activity. What I got was anything but climatic. Right off the bat "you'll get nothing" (basically), then starts to establish himself as an authority on the universe using silly stories that discredit his objectivity, tainting whatever is said thereafter, then finally "life sucks, you die", bang, welcome home. There we are standing in the middle of an empty square, rubble all around. THANK YOU VERY MUCH! I don't know what I expected, and when it wasn't given to me I felt disappointed. When I'm reading an action comic, I can almost hear the music that would be there if it were on television (it's the truth, I can't help it). After the conclusion of Church and State, everything was, like, quiet. But what I started to feel though, as a result, was that you could hear the flies buzzing or (I swear this is true), that hiss you hear when you first step into a big, cold, empty room. I was thinking maybe it was just because I never bothered to try before, so I checked it out and most everything else I have has music, no real incidental sounds. I don't hear a whole lot of music anymore. I tend to try and listen to what's happening around me (I hope I'm making myself clear). The issue that uses the incidental sound element the best was the one where Jaka first tells Cerebus she wants him to meet her husband, that squeeky stair shit was just great. Anyway, I was so disappointed when the new story began I had put the current political turmoil out of my mind and until it was mentioned that there might be personal danger to Cerebus, I had forgotten that something major happened while we were gone and all this quiet is covering it up. When I went back through the final ascension again I came to a better understanding of just what was either done to me or simply happened. I'm glad it ended the way it did. It gave me a little lesson about being a viewer and what happens when you force your own expectations on something with a life and existence totally apart from you. It's not the book that is disappointing, it's the viewer that disappoints himself. I must say, and I hope you take this the right way, the reason I liked the ending to Church and State so much was because the Judge's final speech was so silly (ideologically). The reason I liked it so much was because it seemed as though the endless multi issue diatribe was aimed at me (the viewer), sort of as if he were talking to the soul of Cerebus in its own language. Answering questions with comical analogies punctuated with a blatantly current allusion to human reality. It got very preachy and Opinionated, I felt like it was just you mouthing off the readership, I couldn't help but think of you when I was reading it. Actually I was thinking of who I think you are as is evidenced in your presidential letters and letters column. I really got to like that because in the same way you could argue that for the individual viewer, they become the soul of the main character in a book

such as yours, it was as if you placed yourself in the position of god, which, in terms of the reality of the storyline, is an accurate position. In the final ascension we, the viewer, through Cerebus, get to see god, or at least those are our expectations, and the point that seems to be ultimately made is that if you look to a book to find god all you will find there is the author. The most wonderful thing you did with that whole deal was you told the end of the story, the authority of that information is undeniable. I like the twist on the religious theme of author speaking with the authority of god, to quite simply the opposite. What I was left with was greater excitement for the story ahead **because** I know how it ends, and I want to see how it happens. When you know the eventual outcome, attention shifts from concerns for what might happen to what's happening now, which is why, I think I can hear the flies buzzing.

You have said in the past that most of your income comes from the sales of the reprint volumes. I think that is because your book is so situation oriented. You can read and enjoy the issues if read in reverse sequence to see how the climax came about, how the reality, which seems to prove itself consistent, was founded, and truly enjoy the experience. As far as I know, or as far as the books I read anyway, yours is the only continuous continuity long running series bent on presenting the later half of an individual's life. I read something like the X-Men, and you can argue that it and its like are continuous continuity comics also but come on be real, anyway, I read that and I have no idea about time or distance, or really even what happened in the past. It would seem as though the order of the limited issue episodes could be switched around with little problem, one adventure is in no way contingent upon the previous one. That's not necessarily a fault of these, I still like them to some extent, but you never get a full feel for the personalities of the characters. "Mutant man A feels deeply concerned that his special powers might somehow be dangerous to living things" is really as deep as any mainstreams I am familiar with get. A lot of the people at the comic shop I buy my goods at, are constantly on edge anytime a title they collect is BEHIND SCHEDULE. It's as though what is more important is their punctuality rather than quality. Reading over what I have just written I realize I'm starting to babble, so I will conclude saying, take your time and do it right, please.

Sincerely,

An Appreciative Viewer

I was so glad this one came in when it did. I knew it would fill a lot of space. I think it's a pretty common reaction for a new reader to have. Besides, he also ordered a copy of High Society.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Me and the guys were talking about *Cerebus* the other day, so of course the subject eventually got on to premarital and extramarital sex. We were pretty much agreed that it was okay to fuck on the first date, but the issue that divided our little company was a little more complex: "Is it okay to ask the girl to go halfs on the rubbers?" Since we'd been talking about *Cerebus* in the first place, we figured we'd let you settle it.

Viva Las Vegas,

Derek McCulloch, Publisher
Strawberry Jam Comics
P.O. Box 40430
Berkeley, CA
94704-4430

I can always count on Derek. The first dozen condoms are 'gentleman's treat.' After that you go halfs.

★★★★★★★★★★

Davey, Davey Sim,
King of the Wild Frontier:

Also, I wanted to mention that "iced tea" has got to be one of the most godawful, putrescent conspiracies that the American Capitalist Combine has ever foisted on their mass-consuming drones. I'm sure you agree with me, but if you don't, I spit on your shoes. Ptoo, ptoo.

Irrepressibly,

Derek McCulloch, Publisher
Strawberry Jam Comics
P.O. Box 40430
Berkeley, CA
94704-4430

He really did, too. He spit on my shoes.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave

Bizarre.

The most incredible rumble of thunder just shook my house — I never felt anything like it. Then my mother called my grandmother who lives 200 miles south of us & she said she felt it too. Then I went into the basement & checked on my RABBIT NAMED FANG and his eyes were practically *bulging out of his head*.

And ALL AFTER I HAD JUST READ 117.

My dog is looking dopey too. Jaka's STORY is going great — some of your best work yet (But THEN — WHAT ISN'T). It really ticks me off when you get letters that say 'What the fuck Dave,. You're not working up to par' or 'I love your work but I hate you' . . . because I was talking to one of the teachers at school -DOCTOR FRANK TAYLOR- who teaches a course on cartoons and classic comics (and who is an excellent judge of character) — and he says that Cerebus is a very clever piece of work and that he met you at a convention once *and* said you're a very nice guy. So there.

Would you please come to Connecticut on your next tour? Hopefully near Hartford? You've got a lot of worshippers here who would do most ANY thing to bask in your presence. Well, at least I would. Do you like 'smartfood' popcorn? and 'Mountain Dew'? and body slamming in parking lots? and Monty Python (movies & TV)? These are also passions of ours which we freely partake in & would love to share with you if you would care to join us. Ger too. Bet he'd be a great slammer.

Did you know that the pen I am writing this with "Could win $100,000.00 instantly"? Maybe then I could buy some original artwork.

I truly love you.

Affectionately,

Winona Kress "The Madagascar Wonder"
19 Quaker Lane
Evfield, CT
06082

P.S. My friend Shaun had a haircut like Mr. Withers, but is growing it out. He is much better looking than Mr. Withers anyway — even if the godsquad think he's the Anti-Christ.

I've never had 'smartfood' popcorn (not knowingly anyway). I do like Mountain Dew, but I suspect I'm a little old for body-slamming in parking lots. Ger is probably a little old for body-slamming in parking lots too, but he does so many other things that he's a little old for, what's one more?

'Monty Python' is tits with us.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Before I tell you what I'd like in exchange for all these clams I'm sending you, I have a story in store.

Let's go back to late September last year. I'm in "Dreamhaven" a SF/comic shop in Kinkytown, a small neighborhood around the University of Minnesota campus. Though I have a discount card at a much better comic shop in downtown Minneapolis, I visit this place because they often have back issues still on the stands for cover price. Otherwise, they haven't much to boast — their back issue section is nigh upon negligible (Mutant Ninja

dolls on top of the cardboard boxes, t-shirts hanging from them, by the time you actually get to the comics you find that they haven't any to speak of); on the current comic rack we find Marvel and DC getting a neat, orderly lion's share with alternatives and independents in a couple of messy spin racks. It's hard to find anything, no room to move for more than three people at a time, not much to find: rotten store, that we know.

There I am, trying my luck, wondering why, and I hear the store owners talking, "#112/113", "Square One," "... serves the little grey bastard right ..." I turned to them, asked, "Is the new Cerebus out yet?" And they were all agrin, happy to spread their smugness all over me. "No, we don't carry Cerebus anymore." "Yeah, we got tired of all his bitching in the back pages." "And the book's been shitty lately, anyways" "You'd be best to subscribe, then all your money goes straight to Dave Sims <sic>" Apologizing for their opinionating, one shrugs and giggles, "Editorials are free." I gave the place one last look around then left, vowing not to return. There was nothing there for me.

"Shitty"? I don't get it, didn't they read #111? Were they expecting a mutant slugfest or magical confrontation? I guess you're over their heads, Dave. And your "ranting and raving" in the back pages, what's it got to do with them? With the book itself? And how do they come to the conclusion that my only source is to subscribe? Do they forget that there are at least three more comic stores in town, better stores which all carry and promote Cerebus? They, not you, have lost my business.

It's too bad actually. Four years ago, I bought my first Independent; Cerebus #72. A few months later, I first encountered Dreamhaven and pleased myself with a purchase of Cerebus Jam and all the missing issues from #68-75. It's been nonstop ever since.

Back to our narrative, I quickly speed away to the Good Store (Shinder's) and find a couple dozen copies of #112/113, each singing out to me, vying for my attention. Of course I snatch it up, take it to the park to read, and find even more shitheads on the letters pages. This guy from Land of La-Dee-Das, Mr. Eric Reynolds ... I wonder, Dave, if it were ever revealed that Chris Claremont is a child-beating, Nazi cat-strangler or harbors some other disreputable characteristics, would they pull X-Men, X-Calibur, X-Factor, New Mutants, Class X-Men, X-Nausea, X-Cetera off their shelves, hmmn? And on the subject of "shitty", how many Marvel/DC projects, released due to "popular demand", that contain works of small talent and meager ambition, are still carried and promoted, no matter how shitty? They only hurt the ones they can afford to.

"I am but one of many ..." "they know what a true fuck-up you are ..." Dave, this guy claims he & his fellows aren't idiots and read Alan Moore ... poor Alan must be embarrassed! (When I bought Swamp Thing #76 at Dreamhaven, the counter-guy said, "I haven't read that since Alan Miller left the book.")

Enough of that. Let's jump to the next issue, which I remember purchasing right when the X-Mas shopping season sprung into full fury. Downtown was a mess of consumers. I swam through the crowd, eager to find a quiet seat in the restless shopping centre and get down to reading #114. Next to me was a 40 something man, big, slow, gentle, and his six-year old daughter. As the girl ran under, around the bench, teasing her father, laughing away, I began "Jaka's Story." He bent down and grabbed her, tickling; she writhed and squealed. "You're disturbing the man, Charlotte," he said, after one of her runs around my legs. "Oh, no," I insisted. "I don't mind a bit. Not at all." As Charlotte raced back and forth, the man turned to me and said, "Where do they get their energy?" "If we didn't use it all up by ten, maybe we'd live a little longer," I added. I thought of a counter-quip and a few other observations on childhood, but left them all wisely unsaid. Again I entered "Jaka's Story" and, before leaving to catch a bus, smiled down at little Charlotte, who made my day. Somehow it all meant something, all together. Don't it always, though?

So, I thank you, Dave. I thank you, thank you, etc! This is a beautiful story you're on, I'm with you entirely. And now I'm giving all my money direct to you, as Mr. Dreamhaven suggested, to do with as you wish, you unscrupulous fuck-up, you.

Gimme *Cerebus* ($27 + $2.50) and *Church* and *State Volume Two* ($30 + $2.50). That's $62 and it's all yours. Please send *Cerebus & C&S II* to:

Al McCarty
2220 E. Franklin Ave., #223
Minneapolis, MN.,
55404
Thank you! Dearly.

Say hello to all of our friends at Shinder's for us.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave -

I started with issue 112/113, not a good issue to start with since in 99% of it, no one talked! I had always seen *Cerebus* before, but I never committed myself to buy it. Now, I can't get enough *Cerebus*! I have the *Cerebus* books but I still buy *Cerebus Bi-Weekly* to read your introductions from the *Swords of Cerebus* that I already have! I AM ADDICTED TO *CEREBUS*!!

I've read in the letters sections of the new issues and back issues I've bought that no new readers can understand *Cerebus* at all.

Even buying back issues out of order 95 before 94, and 104 before 103, I understand. Maybe I'm crazy and just think I understand though.

Another change has happened along with my strange understanding of *Cerebus*. The people I know have said they have noticed that I have spouted weird sayings that seem to echo old Notes From The President.

Here's something I don't understand, in the early issues of Cerebus, why is his sword gray and "dotty"?

I have heard that there might be a Cerebus figure to go with that *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* toy crap.

Is that true?

Cerebus Forever

(Even if you have a toy of him with those turtles).

Bill Keenan
1378 Woodbrook
Southlake, TX
76092

Actually, Cerebus' sword is *always* gray and 'dotty'. There won't be a Cerebus TMNT figure or TMNT anything, so you can put your mind at rest.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and/or Gerhard,

What's up? Firstly I want to apologize for my other letters being fairly lame. I hope this one is better, but probably not since I haven't been able to think of anything insightful or intelligent (as Mark Haden Frazer used to put it) lately.

I got my ear pierced last Friday. Just a small, conservative silver stud, but my parents (I'm eighteen) still offered to throw me out, so I removed it. Pretty stupid, huh? (Back me up on this).

Church and State was wonderful (in a breathtakingly depressing way) and *Jaka's Story* looks good. Oh yeah, do you like Led Zeppelin? How about U2 and Mozart?

Lamenting the Decline of The Question Mark,

Marc Montgomery
4592 S. Fraser Way
Aurora, CO
80015

P.S. Whatever happened to Mark? Did he get pissed off because you dogged his girlfriend once too often?

I like Mozart. Especially his early albums. As for your earring, what if you only wore it when you weren't in the house? I mean you've already got a hole in your ear lobe. Of course you're supposed to keep the stud in for a week or so at first, so I guess that blows that idea. Unless you stayed at someone else's house for the first week or so. Or put a band-aid over it and told them you cut yourself really badly while shaving. Sorry I couldn't be more help.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I just realized I've been reading Cerebus for 100 issues. This might not seem like all that much to you, since you're doing the book for three times as long, but it still really means a lot to me. Cerebus, Jaka, Julius, Roach, and the others have been fixtures in my life for over eight years now. (I'm tempted to make a bad joke about lights right now, but I'll pass on it for the moment.) Eight fucking years!!! That's longer than I've done almost anything consistently in my life! There's gotta be something special about a comic book that I could start reading before I even started high school and can keep reading after I've finished college. Dave, you really do some amazing things here. Your handling of time and characters is second to no-one, and your sense of place is amazing - I feel like if I ended up in Iest somehow, I could find my way from one watering hole to another.

I gotta tell you one thing that was prompted by your comments in #118 about how you love it when people see more in the comic than might even be there. I lent my entire set of Cerebus to a friend of mind, a Religious Studies major, and she saw all kinds of deep Hindu spiritualistic dualities in the whole Terim/Tarim/Sump Thing god thing. I'm not sure how to really explain it, because I don't understand a lot of what she's studied, but I thought you might appreciate that. Myself, I graduated in Political Science, and I'm totally fascinated by how Lord Julius organizes and holds his power. He's obviously in full charge and enforces his hegemony through personal whim and unpredictability, and yet he doesn't seem a malevolent ruler. Astoria seems much more autocratic and nasty than Julius: she seems to have learned the mechanics and manipulativeness of Julius without gaining his sense of style. She seems almost scared of being out in the open like Julius or Cerebus, as if she's confident of controlling one or two people but not a large populace. Her type of rule clearly cannot extend to a whole society, because a society ruled by fear of one person is a society that wants to overthrow that person. The fall of Cerebus as Pope shows just how weak the public's feeling towards him were; he ruled solely by fear, and when his threats proved to be bluffs, he became vilified.

Anyway, I'm enjoying Jaka's Story so far. I do hope we see more of Julius soon, but you do what you want. After all, it's your comic. I've been here 100 issues so far, Dave, I'll be with you to #300. Thanks for doing the best comic in the world, and sorry this letter has only one joke in it.

Seeya,

Jed Sacks
7709 S.W. Pfaffle St., #21
Tigard, Oregon 97223

Another member of Club 300. Thanks, Jed.

★★★★★★★★★★

JUSTIFY IT'S JESUS, GARY DO I HAVE TO?
WELL, OKAY, LET ME SEE...
THE COMICS JOURNAL
THE MAGAZINE OF NEWS & CRITICISM
DAVE SIM: The Aardvark man talks about publishers, distributors, and the state of the art!

The Comics Journal 130, shipping the last week of June. Controversy, misguided opinions, baseless assertions, mindless provocation and absolutely nothing about Cerebus. You don't want to miss this one (or maybe you do).

DAVE SIM
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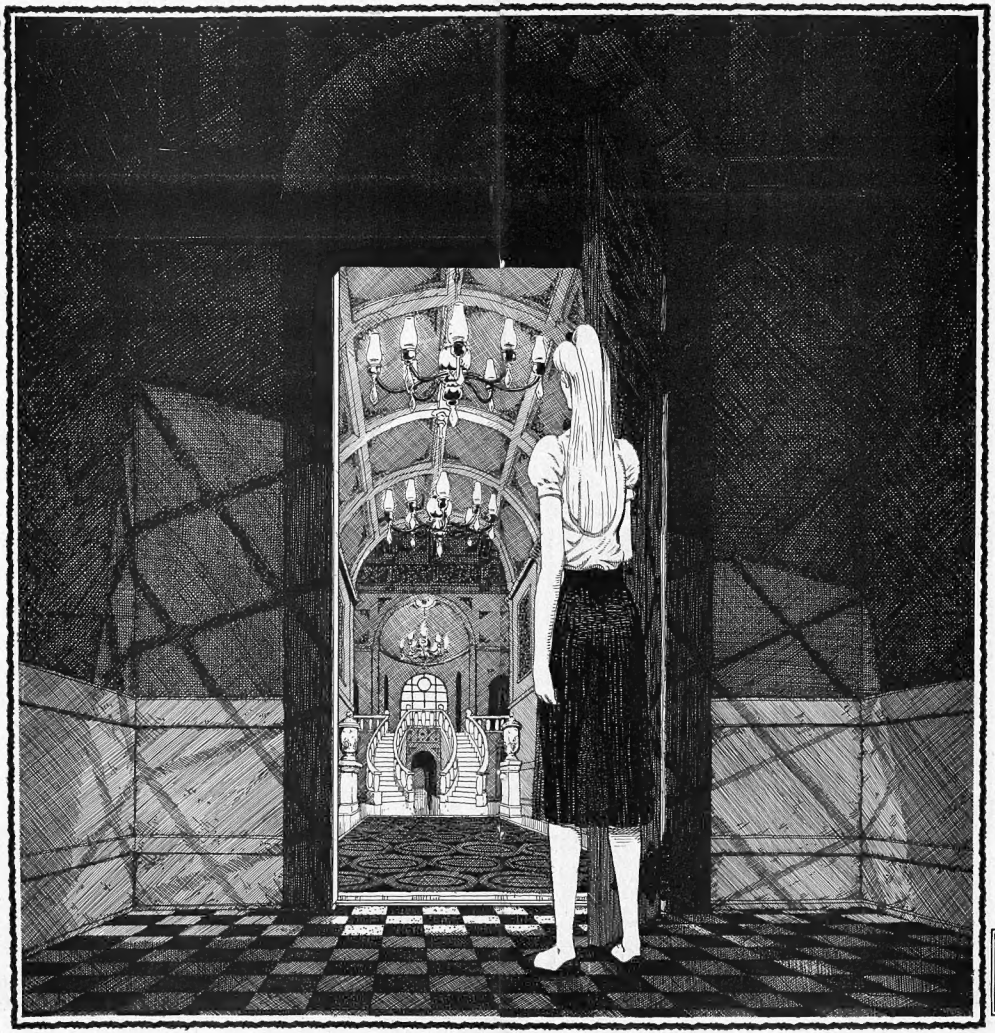
'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.'

Oscar Wilde
preface
to 'Picture of
Dorian Gray'

TASTEFULLY-APPOINTED



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